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## Reclaiming minerals at Superfund site with green technology

By KERRY L. BEISER

An Illinois-based demolition and minerals recovery company is actively demolishing old buildings and reclaiming usable metals at the Superfund site near

Hartford once home to the copper smelter known as Chemetco.

The 400-acre site just outside the village of Hartford in Madison County

housed the copper smelter that operated from 1961 until 2001. It abruptly closed when the federal government discovered Chemetco to be secretly discharging pollutants that contaminated tributaries leading into the Mississippi River. Ultimately Chemetco was found to be in violation of the U.S. Clean Water Act.

But passers-by along Illinois Rte. 3 and New Poag Road since August have no doubt seen a great deal of action at the tract, to the tune of nearly \$2 million in demolition costs alone.

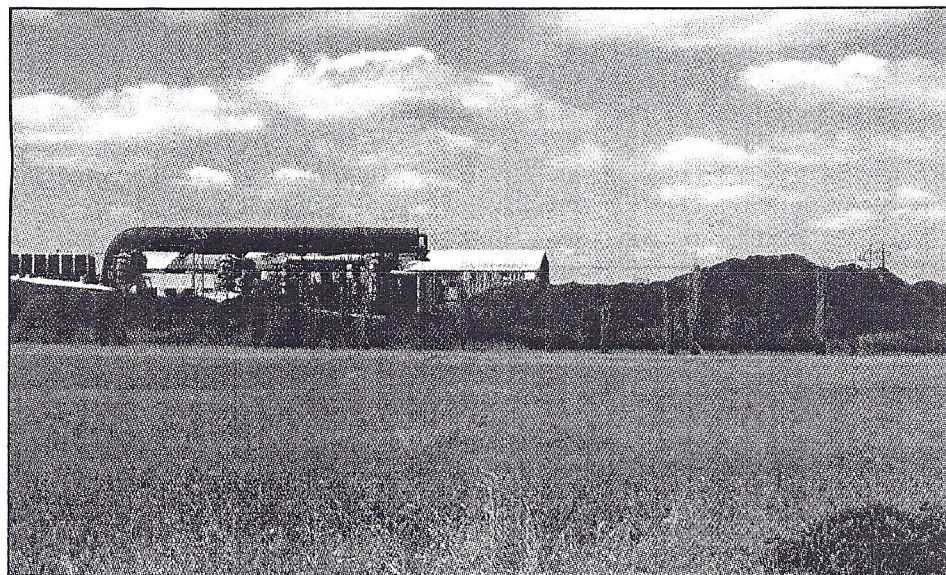
Industrial Asset Disposition, owned and operated by founder and chairman Elliott Stegin, has been working on the project for two years now, but work recently became visible to the public as the demolition phase began. Stegin says his firm, which for many years specialized in the handling of electronic waste from large data and telecommunication centers, recognized Chemetco as a new, distinct challenge.

"And that was even before it became classified (in March) as a Superfund

site," Stegin said. "What we're now doing at the site - the demolition of buildings and processing of the slag and separating metals - was preceded by several years of scientific research. Everything we've done in the lab up to this point has been designed for this site. The slag on the property has its own unique characteristics, so it's necessary to profile each slag dump. The technology we use has to be tailored towards the profile of that pile."

Whereas the metals once processed at Chemetco were used for broader purposes, the metals that are now being separated directly from the pile at the site, according to Stegin, will be headed straight to the commodities markets.

"Our processing company, Paradigm Minerals Environmental Services LLC, has completed construction of a pilot plant, to validate the science, prove scalability to the agencies and enhance our sciences. The pilot plant will be put



*photo by Alan J. Ortbals*

**Industrial Asset Disposition is partnering with the US EPA and IEPA to demolish the Chemetco tract near Hartford, recycle viable minerals from the slag and eventually redevelop the site.**

■ See **CHEMETCO**, page 22



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## CHEMETCO .....

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to other uses as we start building our main plant, upon the US EPA approving our consent decree enabling us to use our process freely. "We finished the plant months ago, and we ran approved batches by the IEPA for our internal studies, soon to be shared with the agencies involved, Stegin said. "We're taking the entire pile, taking what is considered a hazardous pile and by separating out the different metals - iron, zinc, copper and more - and we'll take these base metals and sell them to refineries as recycled, reclaimed metals. It's proprietary technology that we're excited to be using right here in the Hartford community in Madison County."

The plant is a closed-loop system, he says. "Anything we don't capture on the first pass, we send it right back through a second time. And we keep sending it through and keep treating it."

Stegin stresses the contrast between the demise of the site in 2001 - a secret discharge pipe through which polluted waste had been purposely transported for allegedly 10 years - to the current operation, which at its core is environmentally responsible.

"As an example, when we're done, we will have separated out and recycled between 3,000 and 4,000 metric tons of metals, at least 2,000 metric tons of steel and 500 tons of stainless steel," said Stegin. "That's on the low side. The fact that we're only sending a few truckloads to special waste landfills and being able to reclaim the rest of the metal from the pile shows how green this entire operation is and how small of an environmental footprint we're making."

Stegin says the enormous amount of scientific research, plant construction, legal work and environmental consulting

has already made his investment top \$4 million on the project. Chemetco Inc. filed for bankruptcy back in 2001; the Estate of Chemetco currently owns the property and assets. Stegin is paying the sales price into escrow, and the deed will be held by the estate until the US EPA issues a No Further Action letter for that particular lot of land. At that point, ownership will pass to Stegin's firm, Industrial Asset Disposition. The entrepreneur says he is committed to seeing the project site through to eventual redevelopment.

"Partnering with the Illinois EPA and the US EPA on this is a really good experience," Stegin said. "It's not adversarial because we all want the same solution. We're all partners in this. A lot of people were hurt by this. Earlier on, I was attracted to the opportunity as a businessman. But it could be a very good story, too. We're already using local resources in the demolition. We're keeping people employed. What was once a sad story will one day be the site of a thriving business and redevelopment again. If we can really pull this off - and I believe we can and we are already doing so - we can change an industry."

Stegin credits American Integrated Services on the demolition and AMEC Geomatrix on the environmental consulting. Local mechanical and engineering firm GRP Mechanical is performing key work on construction of the minerals recycling plant. Stegin credits Bryan Cave with handling all the legal services for the project.

In October, the largest structure on the Chemetco property - the foundry - is set to be demolished.